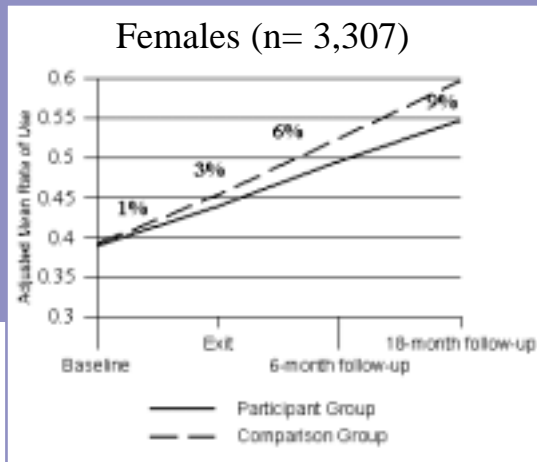
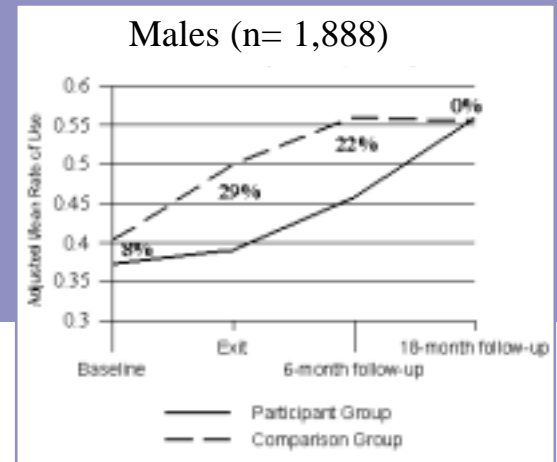


Major Findings #3

Gender Plays An Important Role In Risk, Protection, And Substance Use



Trends in 30-Day Substance Use by Gender.



As shown in the above graphs, boys participating in the study programs used substances at a much lower rate than comparison boys at program exit (29% less), and at 6 months after exit (22%) but this effect had faded by 18 months after the program ended. Positive program benefits for girls developed later, but were increasingly positive throughout the study period. Substance use rates for girls participating in the study program were 3 percent lower than comparison girls at program exit, and 9 percent lower 18 months later.

Despite these differences in the overall effects of program participation on boys and girls, programs that use multiple science-based practices identified in the study produced stronger and longer lasting effects for both boys and girls. Girls participating in the eight programs with particularly strong design and implementation reported substance rates that were 24 percent lower than those reported by comparison girls at their program exit, 24 percent less than comparison girls 6 months after their programs ended, and 13 percent less than comparison girls 18 months after their programs ended. The pattern for boys is very similar. At the end of their programs, boys participating in strong programs reported substance use rates that were 28 percent lower than those reported by comparison boys, still 27 percent lower 6 months after their programs ended, and 15 percent lower than those reported by comparison boys 18 months after their programs ended. When programs are consistently strong in design and delivery, they produce stronger and similar reductions in the rate of substance use for participants relative to comparison youth for both girls and boys at high risk. In these strong programs, the positive effects of substance use for high-risk boys are still significant 18 months after the program has ended. Greater use of science-based practices in community-based prevention will sustain prevention effects for both boys and girls.

The study extended knowledge about substance use, risk and protection, and prevention for boys and girls in additional ways, including the following.

- There are some differences in risk and protection for boys and girls. Family supervision is a more consistent protective factor for girls than for boys, and helps to reduce opportunities for girls to use. While schools are a central forum for the development of self-efficacy and protection against substance use among adolescence, the study suggests that schools may provide this protection more readily for high-risk girls than for high-risk boys. Substance use among boys is affected more by conditions of risk in the neighborhood.
- For girls, programs that focus on behaviorally-oriented life skills topics are particularly important for sustaining positive effects on substance use throughout the 18-month period of followup after programs end. For boys, participation in programs that emphasize methods of delivery that involve youth interactively with peers or adults are particularly important for strengthening program effects on substance use.